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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S FAREWELL CALL ON FONMIN GUL, MAY 26

(U) Classified by Ambassador Eric Edelman; reasons: E.O. 12958 1.4 (b,d).

1, (C) Summary: Attempting to portray bilateral relations as "special", FonMin Gul used the beginning of the Ambassador's farewell call to remind the assembled press that relations have passed through difficult periods. During the meeting Gul expressed clear concern that the renewed PKK insurgency may bring a reaction from the Turkish State that affects ruling AKP's ability to govern. In answer to Gul's private query about apparent sentiment in Washington against Gul's closest foreign policy collaborator Ahmet Davutoglu, the Ambassador noted USG perplexity and concern at the apparent anti-Western drift in GOT policy. Washington will want to see and hear a clear sense of direction from PM Erdogan and Gul during their early June visit. End summary.

2. (U) Using the opening of the Ambassador's farewell call for a statement in front of the TV cameras, Gul made a point of characterizing the bilateral relationship as a "special one". Adding that the relationship had passed through "misunderstandings" and "difficulties in communication", Gul praised the Ambassador for his contribution to the relationship.

3. (C) With the press gone, Gul asserted that difficulties had been merely conjunctural. Turks are not anti-American. There is no ground to believe that Turkey suffers from anti-Semitism, he continued. One should look at Turkish history. "There was no anti-Semitism then, so how could there be any now," he asked.

4. (C) Tacitly admitting that Turkey has changed its Iraq policy to bring it more into line with realities on the ground, Gul sought to underscore how closely Turkey and the U.S. are working together. Acknowledging in a flat tone that the U.S. is encouraging Iraq to have good relations with Turkey, Gul stated that Turkey wants another "democratic Muslim" country in the region. Iraq's leaders are courageous and Jafari had a most successful visit to Turkey; at the same time Turkey used the recent neighbors meeting in Istanbul as a platform not to criticize Iraq but to show support.

5. (C) PM Erdogan had a good visit to Palestine and Israel, Gul added. The Palestinians are taking courageous decisions and Turkey is also encouraged that the U.S. is now devoting more time to the question.

6. (C) BMENA is one of the most important areas for cooperation, Gul averred, with real work going on and intellectual debates reflecting how much the region is learning from Turkey, which has held the first conference of NGOs from Islamic countries. Gul described his own speech at the conference as a very straightforward call for reform. Meetings will continue in Istanbul under the Turkey-Italy-Yemen aegis.

7. (C) NATO solidarity continues very well. Erdogan made a very good visit to Afghanistan and Turkey will increase its assistance as a result. On Cyprus, thanks also to the Ambassador's behind-the-scenes work, Turkey has the high ground. But expectations are high in the north and U.S. support remains necessary.

8. (C) In response, the Ambassador underscored the extraordinary professionalism of the career MFA officers. Courageous leadership from the top on Cyprus had also been important. President Bush puts great stock in leadership; those elected to high office are there for a reason and have an obligation to lead boldly and with vision. In this regard, the President will want to hear Erdogan's and Gul's assessment of where Turkey is headed and what they see as the challenges ahead since the period in front of the AKP government will be even more challenging than the period to date.

9. (C) Economy Minister Babacan's appointment as chief negotiator with the EU would be important as an outward sign of preparations for the Oct. 3 start date, the Ambassador continued. But it appeared Babacan was caught off guard by the suddenness of the announcement; the evening before, Babacan had told the Ambassador he thought he'd be chosen for this politically corrosive job only if Erdogan wanted to

ensure an end to his political career. Gul laughed nervously.

10. (S) The Ambassador then raised the PKK (in leaking the contents of the meeting to the press, Gul's office claimed Gul had raised the issue). In his farewell call on CHOD Ozkok May 25, the Ambassador had noted that the U.S. is providing real-time assistance in combatting the PKK in southeast Turkey. The trilateral talks remain a vehicle for cooperation. Gul replied that the resumption of PKK operations worries him. If terrorism increases, the resulting crackdown by Turkish security services could affect the AKP government's ability to continue reforms. Gul added that he had recently cautioned a group of politicians from the southeast (i.e., Kurds) to pay attention to the sensitivities of the Turkish authorities, since it was essential not to let the reform process be caught up in controversies over perceived support for the PKK.

11. (C) Gul turned to Central Asia. Admitting that Turkey had not paid attention to the need for democratization in the area, he acknowledged the need to support core democratic values and promote democracy, transparency, and human rights. His recent visit to Kyrgyzstan had been fruitful; he had encouraged the new Kyrgyz leadership to compensate for the country's lack of natural resources by making the country a center of democracy and thus comparably attractive to Singapore or Dubai. The Ambassador noted the close consultations between the State Department and MFA on Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia in general. Democratization is a tough, obstacle-filled road, but one must persist.

12. (C) Gul turned edgy as he asked the Ambassador to remain behind for a one-on-one, and refused to look up as notetakers filed out. He then expressed concern at the raising of some think-tank voices in Washington against Ahmet Davutoglu, the Prime Ministry's chief foreign policy advisor, whom Gul had appointed and who is the promoter of the concept of multiple alternatives known as "Strategic Depth". Why are these voices calling for Davutoglu to be removed? He is not against relations with the U.S., Gul asserted.

13. (C) The Ambassador replied that no one in the USG has personalized the question against Davutoglu. His own relations with Davutoglu are fine. The USG is not angry. The problem is broader and more serious. When Davutoglu talks about Turkey being a global player with a multidimensional policy, it creates concerns about how strongly Turkey is committed to rooting itself in the West, in Europe.

14. (C) Turkish leaders called terrorists in Fallujah martyrs, the Ambassador noted. The same leaders deprecated the Iraqi elections beforehand and then initially criticized the results. Then there is the mass appeal of scurrilous anti-U.S. novels like "Metal Storm" and the apparently subsidized publishing of "Mein Kampf". The government has condoned anti-missionary sentiment. He noted the violent, nationalist character of disturbances in Trabzon and elsewhere and police beatings of women participating in International Women's Day-related demonstrations. The AKP government belatedly and perfunctorily expressed public support for the relationship and then only after the Turkish General Staff leadership had strongly supported the relationship. These elements have combined to raise questions in people's minds in Washington. As a result of Turkey's actions, senior U.S. officials are asking where the AKP government is taking Turkey. People in Washington need to see and hear how the AKP leadership will move Turkey forward.

15. (C) Gul exited the meeting visibly rattled and, holding himself apart from the waiting group of Turkish and American diplomats, refused to shake hands. A journalist who interviewed him subsequently later described to the Ambassador how defensive Gul was during her interview.

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